

66/81/20
S. PTO

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Docket No.
WN-1979U.S. PTO
109/252024
02/18/99**To the Assistant Commissioner for Patents:**

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of:

Satoshi HOSHINO

corresponding to Japanese application 10-036254, filed February 18, 1998,

entitled: DEVICE FOR DETECTING A FINGERPRINT, ELECTRIC APPARATUS AND DOORKEEPER APPARATUS

Enclosed are:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12 pages of specification.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 sheets of formal drawings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	a newly-executed declaration of the inventor.
	a copy of an executed declaration of the inventor from prior application Serial No. , filed .
	incorporation by reference. The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied as indicated in the preceding box, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	an assignment of the invention to NEC CORPORATION, including assignment cover sheet.
	Information Disclosure Statement with Form PTO-1449.
	copies of the Information Disclosure Statement citations.
	preliminary amendment.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	return receipt postcard (MPEP 503), specifically itemized.
	a verified statement to establish small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 1.27.
	a verified statement to establish small entity status filed in prior application. Status is still proper and desired.
	a certified copy of the Priority Document.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	other: inventor information sheet.

If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information.

 Continuation Divisional Continuation-in-part (CIP)

of prior application No. , filed .

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Customer No. 000466.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence address is: YOUNG & THOMPSON, 745 South 23rd Street, Second Floor, Arlington, Virginia 22202.
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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER

(continued)

Docket No.
WN-1979**CLAIMS AS FILED**

	NO. FILED	NO. EXTRA	RATE	FEE
BASIC FEE			\$ 760	\$ 760
TOTAL CLAIMS	19 - 20 =	0	X\$ 18	0
INDEPENDENT CLAIMS	1 - 3 =	0	X\$ 78	0
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM PRESENT			\$ 260	0
			TOTAL	\$ 760
If applicant has small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 1.27, then divide total fee by 2, and enter amount here.		SMALL ENTITY TOTAL		\$ 0

A check in the amount of \$800 to cover the filing fee is enclosed.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge indicated fees and credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 in the name of Young & Thompson, as described below. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Charge the amount of \$0 as filing fee.

Credit any overpayment.

Charge any additional fee required under 37 CFR 1.16 and 1.17.

Charge the issue fee set in 37 CFR 1.18 at the mailing of the Notice of Allowance.



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February 18, 1999

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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title Line One:: DEVICE FOR DETECTING A FINGERPRINT,
Title Line Two:: ELECTRIC APPARATUS AND DOORKEEPER
Title Line Three:: APPARATUS
Total Drawing Sheets:: 5
Formal Drawings:: Y
Application Type:: UTILITY
Docket Number:: WN-1979

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Representative Customer Number:: 000466

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATION

Foreign Application One:: 10-036254
Filing Date:: FEBRUARY 18, 1998
Country:: JAPAN
Priority Claimed:: Y

A DEVICE FOR DETECTING A FINGERPRINT,
ELECTRIC APPARATUS AND DOORKEEPER APPARATUS

Background of the Invention:

This invention relates to a device for detecting a fingerprint. Also, this invention relates to an electric apparatus and a doorkeeper apparatus with built-in the device for detecting a fingerprint.

Conventionally, the collation of the fingerprint has been widely used to confirm and identify a person. This is because the fingerprint of each person has immutability and uniqueness. Recently, a device for detecting a fingerprint has been realized to automatically execute fingerprint collation by using the image recognition technology by a computer.

There is the following device as the example of such fingerprint detecting device. When the fingertip is pushed against the glass face of a prism, light is irradiated to the pushed place from inside of glass. A CCD (charge coupled device) camera scans a pattern of intensity of reflected light from the prism and converts photoelectrically into electricity signals. Like this, this device is using the optical technique to measure the unevenness of the fingerprint that contacted with the glass face, by detecting a variable reflection condition.

Alternately, another device comprises a pressure-sensitive sheet and matrix electrode formed on the pressure-sensitive sheet and measures a variation of the electric resistance when the sheet is pushed by a finger. A further device is found by an insulator and pair of electrodes on both sides of the insulator to measure a change

of capacitance between these electrodes when a fingertip pushes one of the electrodes. Other than these device, there is a device that has sensors each of which is arranged in a matrix shape and which is formed by field effect transistor and piezoelectric thin films attached to the channel areas of the field effect transistors. The last-mentioned device can measure electric charges that occur on the piezoelectric thin films when the sensors are pushed by a fingertip.

At any rate, all of the above-mentioned devices for detecting a fingerprint are ready for detecting a fingerprint on pushing the fingerprint input section by a fingertip. This shows that the devices can not accurately detect the fingerprint due to a variation of pressure on pressing the fingertip on the fingerprint input section. Specifically, the pressure is often insufficient or too high to detect the fingerprint. In addition, the pressure that is given to the fingerprint input section is also varied or fluctuated at every person. As the result, errors are very often to happen on the detection of the fingerprint in the conventional device. This makes it difficult to accurately execute collation.

Summary of the Invention:

Therefore, it is an object of the invention to provide a device for detecting a fingerprint that can detect a fingerprint with a low error. It is another object of the invention to provide a device for detecting a fingerprint of the type described, which can reduce a variation of a pressure given to a fingerprint input section. It still another object of the invention to provide an electric apparatus and a doorkeeper apparatus that is incorporated in the above-mentioned device.

According to this invention, a device, which detects a fingerprint of a fingertip placed on a contact surface of a fingerprint input section, comprises a moving element for moving the contact surface when the fingertip is placed on the contact surface, a lock mechanism for fixing the contact surface when the contact surface is moved to predetermined position, and a detecting unit for detecting the fingerprint when the contact surface is fixed by the lock mechanism to the predetermined position.

In the above-mentioned device for detecting a fingerprint, the lock mechanism may comprise a switch for producing a signal when the contact surface is fixed to the lock mechanism and the detecting unit is energized to detect the fingerprint when the detecting unit receives the signal from the switch.

In the above-mentioned device for detecting a fingerprint, the moving element may comprise an energizing member which withstands movement of the contact surface to make a pressure imposed onto the contact surface substantially uniform until the contact surface is fixed to the predetermined position.

The device for detecting a fingerprint mentioned above may comprise a memory for storing a sequence of fingerprint data signals, which is detected from a fingertip and compare a fingerprint of the fingertip placed currently on the contact surface with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in the memory.

For one example, the detecting unit comprises a solid-state image sensor for scanning a fingerprint image into a sequence of data signals.

For another example, the detecting unit comprises a converting circuit to convert a variable pressure from the fingertip

into a variable electric resistance and a measuring circuit to measure the variable electric resistance.

And for another example, the detecting unit comprises a converting circuit to convert a variable pressure from the fingertip into a variable capacitance and a measuring circuit to measure the variable capacitance.

According to this invention, an electric apparatus, which executes a predetermined operation and which includes the above-mentioned device, may be powered when the fingerprint data signal sequence of the fingertip placed currently on the contact surface is stored in the memory. In this electric apparatus, the device may be operable as a power switch.

According to this invention, an electric apparatus, which executes a predetermined operation and which includes the above-mentioned device, may be powered when the fingertip placed currently on the contact surface is coincident with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in the memory. In this electric apparatus, the device may be operable as a power switch.

According to this invention, a doorkeeper apparatus, which controls a door lock mechanism and which includes the above-mentioned device, may open a door when the fingerprint data signal sequence of the fingertip placed currently on the contact surface is stored in the memory. In this doorkeeper apparatus, the device is operable as a doorbell switch.

According to this invention, a doorkeeper apparatus, which controls a door lock mechanism and which includes the above-mentioned device, may open a door when the fingertip placed currently on the contact surface is coincident with the fingerprint

data signal sequence stored in the memory. In this doorkeeper apparatus, the device is operable as a doorbell switch.

Brief Description of the Drawing:

FIG. 1 shows a schematic view of a device for detecting a fingerprint according to an embodiment of this invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic view of the device for detecting a fingerprint of FIG. 1, which is put into a state of detecting a fingerprint;

FIG. 3 is a flow chart for use in describing an operation which is executed in the device for detecting a fingerprint shown in FIG. 1 and 2;

FIG. 4 shows a perspective view of a personal computer that is exemplified as an electric apparatus which can execute the operation;

FIG. 5 is a front view of a doorkeeper apparatus of this invention; and

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of the doorkeeper apparatus shown in FIG. 5.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments:

Next, description will be made about a device for detecting a fingerprint according to each embodiment of the invention in reference to drawings.

In FIGs. 1 and 2, the device for detecting a fingerprint according to a first embodiment optically detects a fingerprint of a fingertip.

More particularly, the illustrated device for detecting a fingerprint comprises a detecting unit 11, a fingerprint input

section 1, and a memory 5. The illustrated detecting unit 11 includes a CCD camera 2, fingerprint extracting portion 3 and a certification processing portion 4. On the other hand, the fingerprint input section 1 has a contact surface 6 an energizing member 7, such as a spring, mechanically coupled to the contact surface 6, and a lock mechanism, namely, a lock mechanism 8. With this structure, the contact surface 6 is pushed down in cooperation with the spring 7 when the fingertip is placed on the contact surface 6. This shows that the spring 7 withstands downward movement of the contact surface 6 when the fingertip is placed on the contact surface 6 and that the contact surface 6 moves upwards when the fingertip is removed from the contact surface 6. In other words, the spring 7 provides mechanical resistance against a pressure of the fingertip.

When the contact surface 6 is pushed down to the lock mechanism 8 placed at a predetermined position, it is locked by the lock mechanism 8.

In the illustrated example, a switch 9 is located at the lock mechanism 8, namely, the predetermined position and is electrically contacted with a conductive peripheral frame 6a which surrounds the contact surface 6.

When the conductive peripheral frame 6a is electrically contacted with the switch 9, an electric signal is sent to the CCD camera 2 of the detecting unit 11.

More specifically, the contact surface 6 is found by a glass face of a prism. When the energizing member or spring 7 is put into a stationary state, the fingerprint input section 1 is kept an initial state shown in FIG. 1. In this event, the lock mechanism 8 holds contact surface 6 at an initial position in the initial state. The

illustrated lock mechanism 8 is formed by a projected portion 6b projected from the frame 6a of the contact surface 6 and a recessed portion 10a on a holder 10. The projected portion 6b is engaged with the recessed portion 10a at the predetermined position. The holder 10 includes a leaf spring or the like which is bent easily.

When the contact surface 6 moves up and down, the holder 10 is deflected or deformed outwards and the contact surface 6 is slid into the recessed portion 10a of the holder 10 and makes the projected portion 6b engaged with the recessed portion 10a (FIG. 2) in order to fix the contact surface 6 to the holder 10. When the contact surface 6 is just pushed at the predetermined portion where the projected portion 6b is engaged with the recessed portion 10a, the engagement between the projected portion 6b and the recessed portion 10a is released and the contact surface 6 is able to be moved upwards again. After leaving the fingertip from the contact surface 6, the contact surface 6 returns back to the initial state by the restoring force of the energizing member 7. The energizing member 7 causes the finger to contact with the contact surface 6. The restoring force of the energizing member 7 is previously determined so that the pressure from the fingertip to the contact surface 6 is suitable for detecting a fingerprint when the projected portion 6b is engaged with the recessed portion 10a. Although not shown in the drawing, when the projected portion 6b is engaged with the recessed portion 10a, the switch 9 is interlocked with the holder 10 and is turned on in order to send the signal to the CCD camera 2.

Supplied with the signal from the switch 9, the CCD camera 2 scans an intensity pattern of light that is reflected by the fingertip irradiated through the contact surface 6. The resultant image is sent to the fingerprint extracting portion 3 and a fingerprint date is

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extracted from the resultant image. The fingerprint extracting portion 3 outputs the fingerprint data as a sequence of electric signals which is thereafter sent to the certification processing portion 4.

FIG. 3 shows the flow chart of the fingerprint detection process in this embodiment. In the initial state illustrated in FIG. 1, a fingertip is placed on the contact surface 6 of the fingerprint input section 1 (STEP 301) and the fingertip pushes down the contact surface 6 (STEP 302). When the contact surface 6 is moved downwards until the projected portion 6b faces to the recessed portion 10a, the projected portion 6b and recessed portion 10a are engaged with each other and the contact surface 6 is locked (STEP 303). At this time, the switch 9 interlocks with the lock mechanism 8 and is turned on to supply the signal to the CCD camera 2 (STEP 304). The CCD camera 2 receives this signal and scans the fingertip on the contact surface 6 (STEP 305). The results of scanning are sent to the fingerprint extracting portion 3 which extracts the fingerprint data from the results (STEP 306). Upheaved portions on ridge of the fingerprint are tightly contacted with the contact surface 6, the reflected light in the contacted portions is varied in depending upon reflected conditions and is converted into the electric signal sequence is sent to the certification processing portion 4. The certification processing portion 4 executes the registration or collation of the fingerprint (STEP 307). In the case of the fingerprint registration, the electric signal sequence is stored in the memory 5 (STEP 308). In the case of the fingerprint collation, the fingerprint is compared with a data sequence which is previously stored in the memory 5 (STEP 309).

DECODED EDITION

According to the embodiment, when the contact surface 6 is pushed down to the predetermined position, the projected portion 6b and the recessed portion 10a are connected to each other due to operation of the lock mechanism 8. As a result, the pressure on the contact surface 6 at the predetermined position is kept constant. At the same time, the switch 9 is put in an on-state and the CCD camera scans the image of the fingerprint with a constant pressure added to the contact surface 6 by the fingertip for a scanning time interval, namely, a time interval of detecting the fingerprint actually. Therefore, the fingertip is detected with a suitable pressure imposed onto the contact. Therefore, the device for detecting a fingerprint according to the embodiment of the invention can reduce errors on detection of the fingerprint and also correct the errors.

On the other hand, a click impression or a feeling of engagement from the lock mechanism 8 can inform the user whether the pressure of the fingertip is sufficient or not. In other words, a user can adjust the pushing power of the fingertip until the click impression is obtained. Until the click impression is obtained, the user continues to push the contact surface 6 and may increase the pressure. Thus, the click impression notifies the user of unnecessary of pushing the contact surface 6 any more. Therefore, the click impression prevents insufficient and surplus pressure of the fingertip.

Furthermore, although the device for detecting a fingerprint mentioned about optically detects the image of the fingerprint, this invention is not limited to this embodiment. This invention is applicable to a device for detecting a fingerprint which uses various methods for a detecting fingerprint. For example, the detecting

methods may be executed by using a pressure-sensitive sheet, by measuring a change of capacitance change between electrodes, by using field effect transistors or the else. Also, the contact surface 6 of the fingerprint input section 1 is not limited to the glass face of the prism. A material of the contact surface 6 may be, for example, a fiber optical plate, semiconductor sensors, and micro prism sensors or the like.

The device for detecting a fingerprint of this invention mentioned above may be incorporated into various electric apparatus. For example, the device of this invention is incorporated in a power switch (a push button) 13 of a personal computer 12 or a workstation shown in FIG. 4.

In order to limit users of a personal computer in question, a password is usually given to every regular user and anyone who does not enter the correct password can not operate the personal computer.

However, if the fingerprint detecting apparatus of this invention is incorporated in the power switch 13 of the personal computer 12, it is possible that the power supply becomes ON and the personal computer 12 starts only in the case that the fingerprint of person who touches the power switch is matched with a fingerprint registered in advance. This makes it unnecessary to set a password and to input the password. Also, the personal computer including both this invention and a password system permits the use of registered user who forgets the password and rejects the use of an unregistered user who obtains a password illegally.

Similarly, the device for detecting a fingerprint of this invention may be also incorporated in pushbutton switches of various electric apparatus like a television set and an audio

apparatus etc. In this case, it is possible to restrict uses of the electric apparatus.

As shown in FIG. 5 and 6, the fingerprint detecting apparatus of this invention may be also incorporated in a doorkeeper apparatus which includes a buzzer switch (a push button) 14. This doorkeeper apparatus registers or stores fingerprint of a family in a memory 5 in advance. When the buzzer switch 14 is pushed, the doorkeeper apparatus compares the registered fingerprints of the family with a fingerprint of a finger that touches the buzzer switch 14. Only when the touching the fingerprint in question is matched to with the registered one, the doorkeeper apparatus sounds the buzzer 15 and releases the lock of the door lock portion 17 to open the door 16. According to this doorkeeper apparatus, a person whose fingerprint data are registered can open the door without the key. On the other hand, a person whose fingerprint data are not registered can never open the door. Therefore the doorkeeper apparatus is applicable to a security system of a company etc.

Furthermore, the device for detecting a fingerprint of this invention may be incorporated in a pushbutton switch that exist in various apparatus originally. This means the device for detecting a fingerprint does not need any new switches related to fingerprint detection. Therefore, the apparatus of the invention is simple in structure and in low in cost.

As mentioned above, this invention can detect always a fingerprint when a regular pressure is added to the contact surface, namely, this invention can detect the fingerprint with an optimal pressure imposed by a fingertip. Therefore, this invention improves the precision of detecting a fingerprint.

Also, this invention can notify whether or not the pressure of the fingertip is sufficient enough to detect the fingerprint correctly by the presence of the click impression of the lock mechanism to the user. Consequently, this invention can easily prevent the fingertip's pressure from becoming too high or too low when the fingerprint is detected.

The fingerprint detecting apparatus of this invention may be incorporated to the power switches of various electric apparatus. As mentioned above, the doorbell switch of doorkeeper apparatus that includes the device for detecting a fingerprint can restrict the user of these apparatus at a low cost in a simple structure.

While this invention has thus far been described in conjunction with a few embodiments thereof, it will be readily possible for those skilled in the art to put this invention into various other manners.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A device for detecting a fingerprint of a fingertip placed on a contact surface of a fingerprint input section, comprising:
 - a moving element for moving the contact surface when the fingertip is placed on the contact surface;
 - a lock mechanism for fixing said contact surface when said contact surface is moved to predetermined position; and
 - a detecting unit for detecting the fingerprint when said contact surface is fixed by said lock mechanism to said predetermined position.
2. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein:
 - said lock mechanism comprises a switch for producing a signal when said contact surface is fixed to said lock mechanism; and
 - said detecting unit is energized to detect the fingerprint when said detecting unit receives said signal from said switch.
3. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said moving element comprises an energizing member which withstands movement of said contact surface to make a pressure imposed onto said contact surface substantially uniform until said contact surface is fixed to said predetermined position.
4. A device as claimed in claim 2, wherein said moving element comprises an energizing member which withstands movement of said contact surface to make a pressure imposed onto said contact surface substantially uniform until said contact surface is fixed to said predetermined position.
5. A device as claimed in claim 1, comprising:
 - a memory for storing a sequence of fingerprint data signals, which is detected from a fingertip; and

means for comparing a fingerprint of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

6. A device as claimed in claim 2, comprising:

a memory for storing a sequence of fingerprint data signals, which is detected from a fingertip; and

means for comparing a fingerprint of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

7. A device as claimed in claim 3, comprising:

a memory for storing a sequence of fingerprint data signals, which is detected from a fingertip; and

means for comparing a fingerprint of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

8. A device as claimed in claim 4, comprising:

a memory for storing a sequence of fingerprint data signals, which is detected from a fingertip; and

means for comparing a fingerprint of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

9. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said detecting unit comprises a solid-state image sensor for scanning a fingerprint image into a sequence of data signals.

10. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said detecting unit comprises:

a converting circuit to convert a variable pressure from the fingertip into a variable electric resistance; and

a measuring circuit to measure said variable electric resistance.

11. A device for detecting a fingerprint as claimed in claim 1, wherein said detecting unit comprises:

a converting circuit to convert a variable pressure from the fingertip into a variable capacitance;

a measuring circuit to measure said variable capacitance.

12. An electric apparatus which executes a predetermined operation and which includes the device claimed in claim 8, wherein said electric apparatus is powered when the fingerprint data signal sequence of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface is stored in said memory.

13. An electric apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the device is operable as a power switch.

14. An electric apparatus which executes a predetermined operation and which includes the device claimed in claim 8, wherein said electric apparatus is powered when the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface is coincident with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

15. An electric apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein the device is operable as a power switch.

16. A doorkeeper apparatus which controls a door lock mechanism and which includes the device claimed in claim 8, wherein said doorkeeper apparatus opens a door when the fingerprint data signal sequence of the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface is stored in said memory.

17. A doorkeeper apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the device is operable as a doorbell switch.

18. A doorkeeper apparatus which controls a door lock mechanism and which includes the device claimed in claim 8, wherein said doorkeeper apparatus opens a door when the fingertip placed currently on said contact surface is coincident with the fingerprint data signal sequence stored in said memory.

19. A doorkeeper apparatus as claimed in claim 18, wherein the device is operable as a doorbell switch.

Abstract of the Disclosure:

When a contact surface 6 of a fingerprint input section 1 is pushed down by a fingertip and the projected portion 6b faces the recessed portion 10a, the projected portion 6b slides into the recessed portion 10a so that the contact surface 6 is put in a locked state. At this time, a switch 9 is turned on and sends a signal to a fingerprint detecting portion 11. Responsive to the signal, the detecting portion 11 scans the fingertip on the contact surface 6 to be converted into a sequence of electric signal and to be stored into a memory. The fingerprint detecting portion 11 compares a fingerprint with the fingerprint data signal stored in the memory 5 to identify a fingerprint. With this structure, the pressure imposed by the fingertip onto the fingerprint input section 1 is kept constant during detection of the fingerprint.

DRAFTED 03/14/2014 10:22 AM 4/18/2014

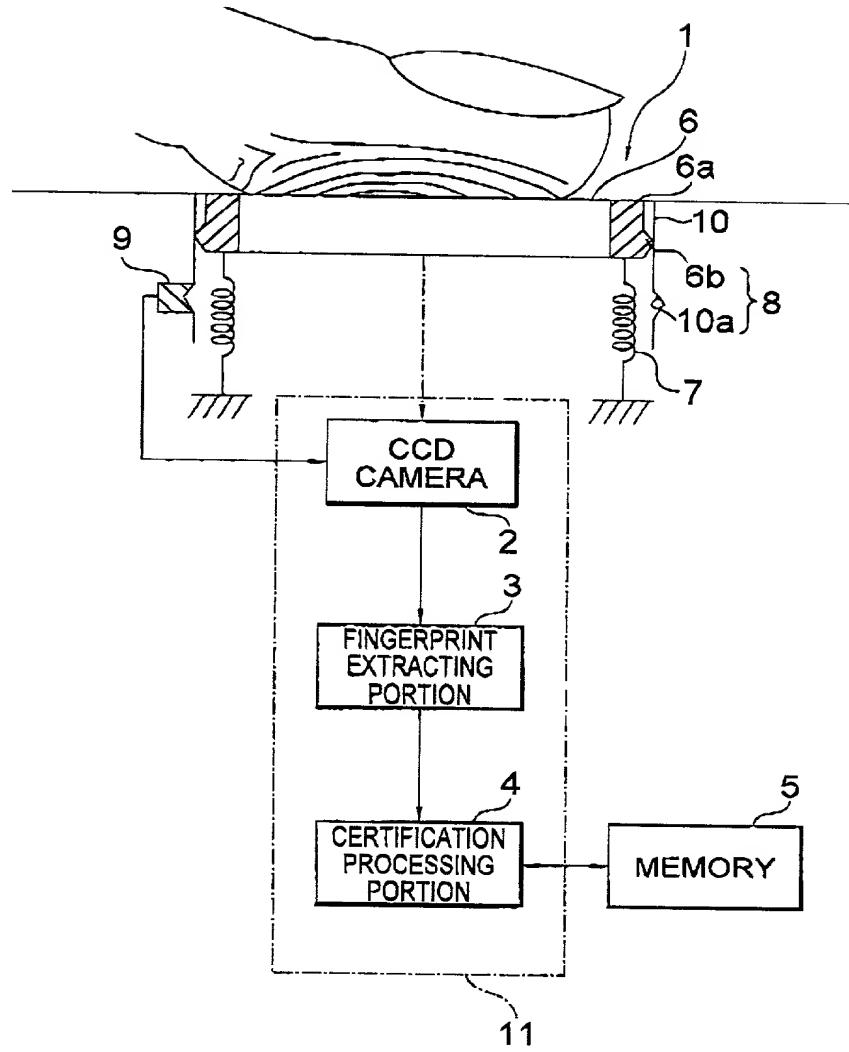


FIG. 1

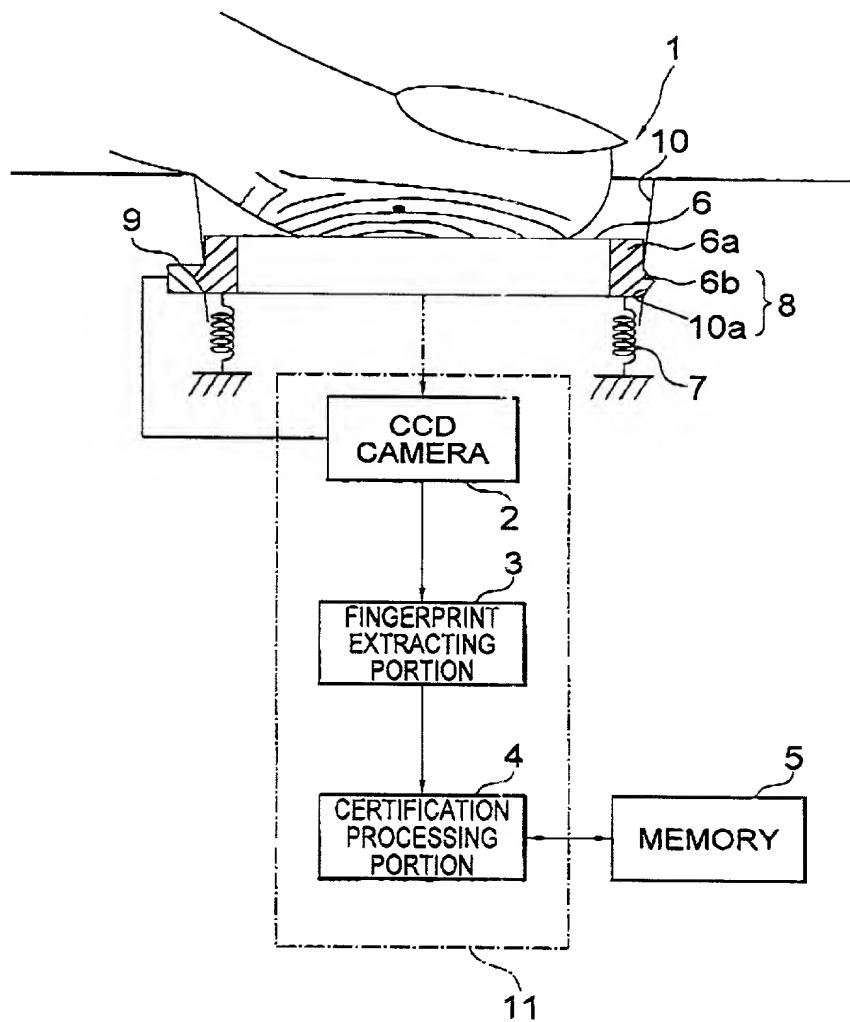


FIG. 2

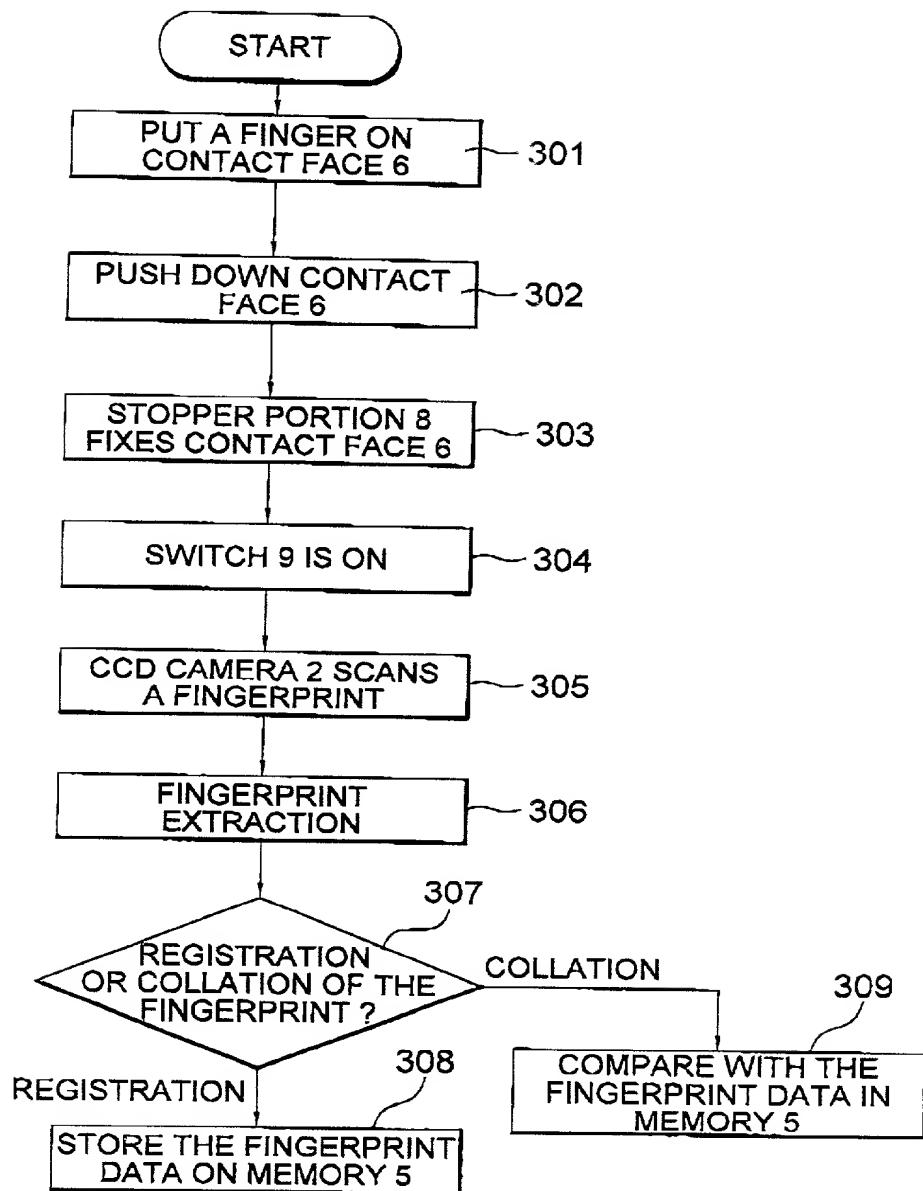


FIG. 3

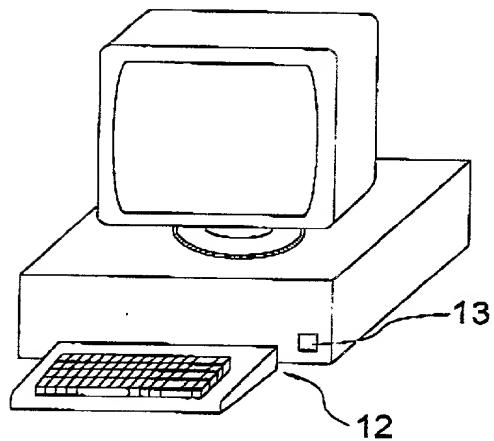


FIG. 4

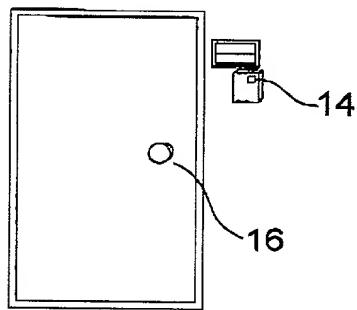


FIG. 5

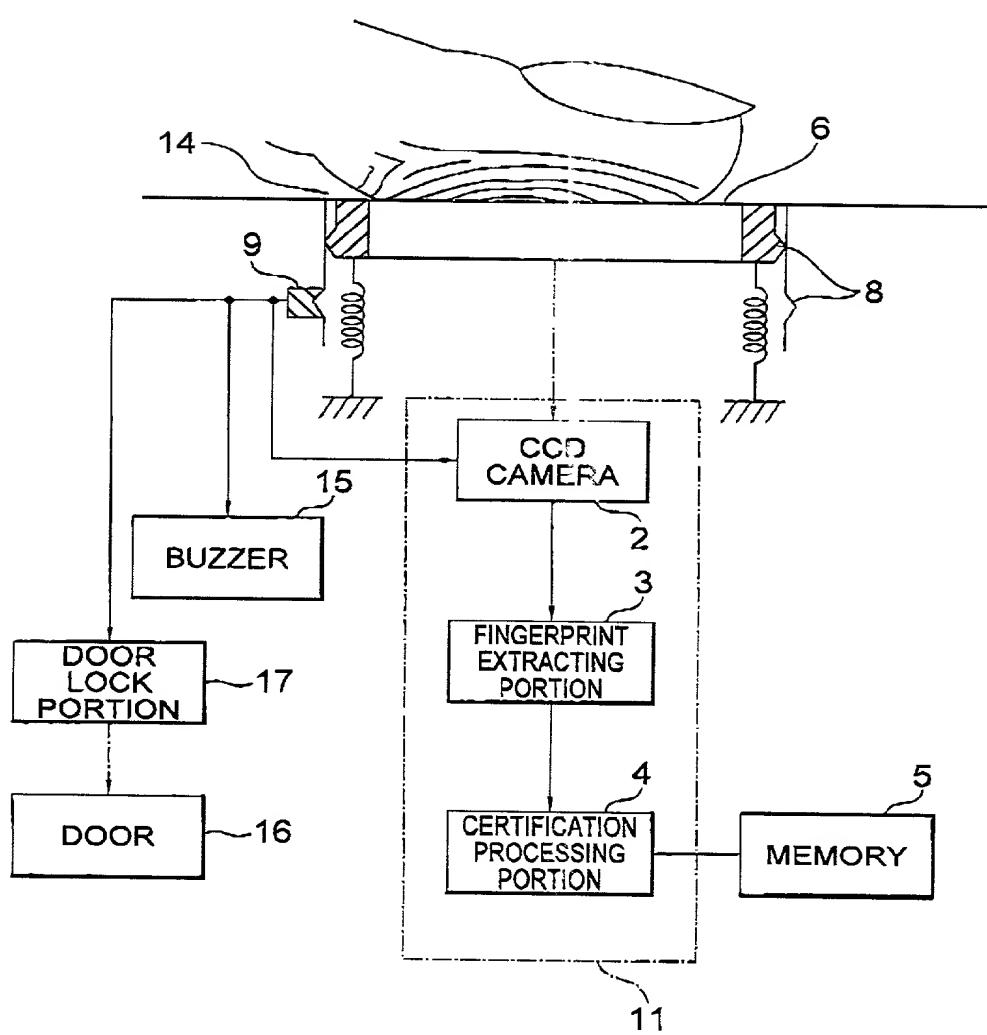


FIG. 6

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

A DEVICE FOR DETECTING A FINGERPRINT, ELECTRIC APPARATUS AND
DOORKEEPER APPARATUS

the specification of which: *(check one)*

REGULAR OR DESIGN APPLICATION

is attached hereto.

was filed on _____ as application Serial No. _____
and was amended on _____
(if applicable).

PCT FILED APPLICATION ENTERING NATIONAL STAGE

was described and claimed in International application No. _____
filed on _____
and as amended on _____ (if any).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56.

PRIORITY CLAIM

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 USC 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATION(S)

Country	Application Number	Date of Filing (day, month, year)	Priority Claimed
Japan	036254/1998	18/2/1998	yes

(Complete this part only if this is a continuing application.)

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 USC 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 USC 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37 Code of Federal Regulations §1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status--patented, pending, abandoned)

POWER OF ATTORNEY

The undersigned hereby authorizes the U.S. attorney or agent named herein to accept and follow instructions from _____ as to any action to be taken in the Patent and Trademark Office regarding this application without direct communication between the U.S. attorney or agent and the undersigned. In the event of a change in the persons from whom instructions may be taken, the U.S. attorney or agent named herein will be so notified by the undersigned.

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith: **Robert J. PATCH, Reg. No. 17,355, Andrew J. PATCH, Reg. No. 32,925, Robert F. HARGEST, Reg. No. 25,590, Benoît CASTEL, Reg. No. 35,041, Eric JENSEN, Reg. No. 37,855, and Thomas W. PERKINS, Reg. No. 33,027**, c/o YOUNG & THOMPSON, Second Floor, 745 South 23rd Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202.

Address all telephone calls to Young & Thompson at 703/521-2297.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full name of sole or first inventor: **SATOSHI HOSHINO**
(given name, family name)

Inventor's signature Satoshi Hoshino  Date February 16, 1999

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Full name of second joint inventor, if any:
(given name, family name)

Inventor's signature _____ Date _____

Residence:

Citizenship:

Post Office Address:

Full name of third joint inventor, if any:
(given name, family name)

Inventor's signature _____ Date _____

Residence:

Citizenship:

Post Office Address: